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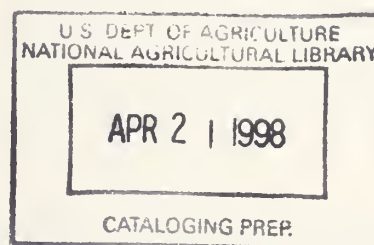
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PRELIMINARY REPORT  
June 1954

ATTITUDES OF FARM OPERATORS IN HARRISON COUNTY, KENTUCKY  
TOWARD OLD-AGE AND SURVIVORS INSURANCE PROGRAM



U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
AGRICULTURAL MARKETING SERVICE  
DIVISION OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS  
FARM POPULATION AND RURAL LIFE BRANCH







ATTITUDES OF FARM OPERATORS TOWARD OLD-AGE AND SURVIVORS INSURANCE PROGRAM  
IN HARRISON COUNTY, KENTUCKY

By

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This preliminary report is based on a study of provisions made for old age and security by families of farm operators in Harrison County, Kentucky and of their attitudes toward Old Age and Survivors Insurance. <sup>1/</sup> The field work was done in June 1954, by the Agricultural Marketing Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture, in cooperation with the Kentucky Agricultural Experiment Station. The study parallels similar studies made in Connecticut, Wisconsin, and Texas by the respective Experiment Stations in cooperation with the Farm Population and Rural Life Branch of Agricultural Marketing Service.

ATTITUDES TOWARD THE PRESENT OASI PROGRAM

Many of the farm operators in Harrison County reported some experience with the Old-Age and Survivors Insurance Program. Due largely to this experience, about 4 in 10 of the operators were fairly well informed about the functions of the OASI program (table 1).

Table 1. Knowledge of the Old-Age and Survivors Insurance Program indicated by farm operators

Knowledge of OASI program	All operators	
	Number	Percent
Total	204	100
Fairly well informed	78	38
Some knowledge	28	14
Hazy understanding	47	23
Practically no knowledge	51	25

Operators classed as well-informed knew how the program is financed, of the retirement and survivors' benefits available, and of the eligibility requirements of workers. One-seventh had some knowledge of the program, but were uncertain about one or more of the major provisions. About a fourth had some understanding of the program without knowing any of its specific provisions. The remainder, comprising a fourth of the operators had practically no knowledge of the OASI program.

<sup>1/</sup> Harrison County, located in the Inner Blue Grass Region of the State, had 2,011 farms in 1950, about 90 percent of which were classed as commercial farms. Tobacco is the chief field crop. A sample of 204 farm operators were interviewed. The sample was drawn by the area sampling technique.



General Attitude Toward OASI Program

Eighty-nine percent of the operators expressed general or qualified approval of the OASI program, 7 percent disapproved of it, and the remaining 4 percent took no position on the question (table 2).

Table 2. Attitudes of farm operators towards the OASI program, by tenure status of the operator

Attitudes toward program	All operators		<u>Tenure status of operators</u>	
			<u>Owners</u>	<u>Tenants</u>
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Total	204	100	100	100
Approval	152	75	70	84
Qualified approval	29	14	18	7
No position	9	4	3	6
Qualified disapproval	3	2	2	1
Disapproval	11	5	7	2

Tenure status affected only slightly the attitudes of the operators. Ninety-one percent of the tenants interviewed expressed approval of the program, and only 2 percent gave their unqualified disapproval. Eighty-eight percent of the owners approved the program, but 7 percent gave their unqualified disapproval.

Attitude Toward OASI Coverage of Farm Operators

Farmers did not endorse OASI coverage of certain farm groups as often as they did the OASI program in general. However, over three-fourths of the operators expressed approval of their own coverage under the OASI program (table 3).

Table 3. Attitude of farm operators toward OASI coverage of operators

Attitude toward OASI coverage of farm operators		All operators	
		<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Total	<u>1/</u>	204	100
Should be covered		156	77
Should not be covered		19	9
Uncertain		29	14

1/ Three of the operators approved OASI coverage conditionally.



Fewer than 1 in 10 felt that farm operators should not be covered and 1 in 7 were uncertain as to whether they would like to see operators included in the OASI program. If those farmers who were uncertain are disregarded, about 9 in 10 of the rest of the operators approved OASI coverage for farm operators.

Over two-thirds of the farm operators who approved their own coverage felt that farmers need the protection for old-age security. About 1 in 4 said that farmers should have the same rights as nonfarm businessmen and felt that they had been discriminated against by not being in the program. Those with negative attitudes generally believed that farm operators should take care of their own old age by savings and investments and without the government interference that such coverage might involve. Others felt that there would be too much "red tape" and doubted that a satisfactory program could be worked out for the coverage of farmers.

Attitudes by net worth of operator - A definite relationship existed between the net worth of an operator and his attitude toward farm operator coverage by the OASI program. As the net worth of the operators increased, the proportion of them approving coverage decreased (table 4).

Table 4. Attitude of farm operators toward OASI coverage of operators, by net worth 1/

Attitude toward OASI coverage of farm operators	Net worth of operator			
	Under \$5,000	\$5,000 - 9,999	\$10,000- 19,999	\$20,000 and over
	<u>Percent</u>			
Total	100	100	100	100
Should be covered	64.84	80	74	64
Should not be covered	4	4	15	16
Uncertain	12	15	11	20

1/ The proportion of farm operators in the survey falling into the various net worth groups are as follows: 34 percent - less than \$5,000; 23 percent - \$5,000 - 9,999; 19 percent - \$10,000 - 19,999; and 24 percent - \$20,000 and over.



Eighty-four percent of the farm operators with net worth of less than \$5,000 approved OASI coverage for farm operators. The proportion approving coverage decreased progressively with each increasing net worth group until only 64 percent of the operators with the highest net worth approved such coverage. In the case of disapproval, the reverse was true; four times as many operators with the highest net worth disapproved coverage of operators as those with the lowest net worth - 16 and 4 percent, respectively. Farm operators with the highest net worth also had the largest proportion indicating uncertainty as to the desirability of operator coverage.

Attitudes by age of farm operators - Relatively more farm operators who were 35 to 44 years of age and those 65 and older, and fewer operators in the 45 to 64 age group approved OASI coverage for farm operators (table 5). Omitting those operators who were uncertain about operator coverage, it appears that 93 percent

Table 5. Attitudes of farm operators toward OASI coverage of operators, by age <sup>1/</sup>

Attitudes toward OASI coverage of farm operators	Age of operators				
	Under 35	35 - 44	45 - 54	55 - 64	65 and over
	Percent				
Total	100	100	100	100	100
Should be covered	75	87	73	62	79
Should not be covered	6	7	9	15	12
Uncertain	19	6	18	23	9

<sup>1/</sup> The proportion of operators in the survey falling into various age groups were as follows: 18 percent under 35; 26 percent 35 - 44; 22 percent 45 - 54; 17 percent 55 - 64; and 17 percent 65 and over.

of the operators under 35 approved the coverage of operators, as compared with 87 percent of the oldest operators. Farm operators 35 - 44 age group gave the coverage of operators unconditional approval in greater proportion than any other age group. This group also had fewer disapprovals and uncertainties. It is this group that has probably had the greatest contact with the OASI program.



## ATTITUDES TOWARD OASI COVERAGE OF SHORT-TIME WORKERS

The attitudes of farm operators toward the coverage of workers employed for 3 to 6 months, those employed for 1 to 3 months, and those employed less than a month were recorded. More than two-thirds of the operators were in favor of extending some sort of coverage to short-time workers, the degree of favorability decreasing with the length of time worked. Sixty-nine percent would favor it for those employed for from 3 to 6 months, 59 percent for those who worked from 1 to 3 months, and 51 percent for those working for less than a month or for any unspecified period. Nineteen percent of the operators disapproved of the coverage of any or all short-time workers and 12 percent were uncertain as to whether they should be included at all. (table 6).

Table 6. Attitude of farm operators toward OASI coverage for farm workers employed for various periods of time.

	<u>Percent</u>
Approved coverage for those workers who worked 3 to 6 months	69
Approved coverage for those who worked 1 to 3 months	59
Approved coverage for those who worked for less than 1 month or regardless of length of time	51
Disapproved coverage for any short-time workers	19
Uncertain about coverage for any short-time worker	12

The principal reasons farmers gave for approving the coverage of short-time workers were:

1. Farm workers have the greatest need for protection in old age among the agricultural population.
2. If nonfarm workers are under OASI, farm workers should also be covered.
3. Farm workers would now rather work at nonfarm work because they get protection there.

Of the operators who opposed coverage of short-time farm workers, over half gave as their reason that the bookkeeping task would be onerous and keeping up with the records would be almost impossible. Other objections to the coverage of the farm workers were that (1) workers do not want money held out of their wages for the payment of OASI charges; (2) the workers expect the operator to pay the employees' part of the OASI as well as his own, thereby raising the cost of operation; (3) the average short-time farm worker is a "sorry lot" and does not deserve OASI coverage; (4) the worker should take care of his own security in old age.



Attitude Towards OASI Coverage of Short-time Farm Workers by Net Worth  
of the Farm Operator

Two significant trends appear in the attitudes of farm operators toward OASI coverage for the short-time farm workers, when tabulated by the net worth of the operators. First, operators with net worth of \$20,000 and over are less likely to approve and much more likely to disapprove coverage for short-time workers than are those operators with net worth of less than \$5,000. Second, the shorter the work period of the short-time farm worker, the less likely operators in all net worth classes were to approve coverage for these workers (table 7).

Table 7. Attitudes of farm operators toward OASI coverage of short-time farm workers by net worth of operator

Attitudes toward OASI coverage of various short-time workers	All operators		Net worth of operator			
			Under \$5,000	\$5,000- 9,999	\$10,000- 19,999	\$20,000 & over
	Number	Percent	Percent			
<u>Workers hired for 3 to 6 months</u>	204	100	100	100	100	100
Should be covered	140	69	74	67	72	60
Should not be covered	38	19	12	20	10	34
Uncertain	26	12	14	13	18	6
<u>Workers hired for 1 to 3 months</u>	204	100	100	100	100	100
Should be covered	120	59	61	61	59	54
Should not be covered	49	24	20	24	15	36
Uncertain	35	17	19	15	26	10
<u>Workers hired less than a month</u>	204	100	100	100	100	100
Should be covered	104	51	49	52	54	50
Should not be covered	69	34	35	33	26	40
Uncertain	31	15	16	15	20	10

A relatively high proportion of the farm operators with net worth of \$10,000 - \$19,999 approved OASI coverage for short-time farm workers in all categories. They also had a higher proportion of operators answering "uncertain" than any of the other groups.



Attitude of Farm Operators Toward OASI Coverage of Short-Time Farm Workers,  
by Number of Hired Workers Employed by Operators in 1953

Farm operators with the largest number of short-time workers were more likely to disapprove OASI coverage for workers in all three time categories than were those operators who hired fewer short-time workers in 1953 (table 8).

Table 8. Attitudes of farm operators toward OASI coverage of short-time workers, by number of hired workers employed by the operators in 1953

Attitudes toward OASI coverage of various short-time workers	Number of hired workers employed by operator in 1953 <sup>1/</sup>				
	none	1 - 3	4 - 6	7 - 9	10 or more
	----- Percent -----				
<u>Workers hired for 3 to 6 months</u>	100	100	100	100	100
Should be covered	72	66	69	71	62
Should not be covered	15	14	23	21	38
Uncertain	13	20	8	8	0
<u>Workers hired for 1 to 3 months</u>	100	100	100	100	100
Should be covered	61	53	60	64	62
Should not be covered	23	20	29	21	38
Uncertain	16	27	11	15	0
<u>Workers hired for less than a month</u>	100	100	100	100	100
Should be covered	48	48	54	57	62
Should not be covered	37	26	40	29	38
Uncertain	15	26	6	14	0

<sup>1/</sup> The proportion of farms hiring farm workers in various numbers in 1953 were as follows: (1) 35 percent hired none; (2) 28 percent hired 1-3 workers; (3) 24 percent hired 4-6 workers; (4) 7 percent hired 7-9 workers; and (5) 6 percent hired 10 or more workers.

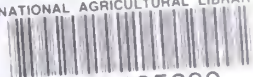
Omitting the answers of those who were uncertain, the remaining operators would be more likely to approve coverage for short-time farm workers if they did not hire many of them during the year. The principal reason for the relatively high degree of uncertainty about the coverage of short-time farm workers by the operators who hired few workers was their inexperience with the program and their fear of the difficulty of keeping records on them. Operators with the largest number of workers were clearly for or against OASI coverage for short-time farm workers and showed no uncertainty in their opinions.







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